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PREACHED BY

HENRY WARD BEECHER.



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## THE OLD PATHS.

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"Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls."—JER. vi., 16.

"Because my people hath forgotten me, they have burned incense to vanity, and they have caused them to stumble in their ways from the ancient paths, to walk in paths, in a way not cast up."—JER. xviii., 15.

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The word *path* is equivalent to our word *road*. We have been so familiar from our childhood with the universality of roads, and their permanence, that we scarcely can imagine a condition of society in which a road was one of the highest marks of civilization. I believe there is in all Palestine, to-day, but one road—that over which the French line of coaches goes to Baalbec. Paths are still the only thoroughfares; and, in ancient times, when men grew dull, heedless of the common weal, selfish, even these paths were obliterated. Torrents washed them out, or they were overgrown. As there was no intercommunication of commerce, a species of lethargy pervaded the whole people, and paths, for the most part, disappeared. Then men who went from province to province, or from tribe to tribe, were obliged to thread their way, as best they could, through the thicket, and over the rock—stumbling, here and there, in the most inconvenient way.

The transition is very natural from an outward physical path to moral uses. Thus, the roads and paths in which men are accustomed to walk with their feet would very readily suggest the road that men's thoughts habitually walk in—the path in which their feelings are accustomed to move, and the way in which their conduct naturally flows. So we find the



whole Word of God full of "paths," "ways," "walks," as equivalent to the habits—social, moral, and political—of the people. The transfer from a physical to a moral path was almost inevitable.

You will find, upon investigation, in the Old Testament particularly, that paths refer to things physical—to the regular, constant habit of working or sleeping, or fighting, or whatever else the body did. It is also applied to manners and customs—to those established methods of intercourse which grow up in society, and by which complex communities are able to live at peace with themselves. Paths or ways, as they are laid down in the Old Testament, refer to the regular carriage of a man's dispositions, and to the line which his thoughts pursue—especially to his moral dispositions. They refer to worship, and to all those habits which were engendered by institutions and laws and customs.

It is in this secondary and moral sense, of course, that we shall use the passage to-day, for the sake of pointing out the wisdom and the necessity, in all those who would go right, of keeping upon the old ways—the ascertained ways—the ways which, in the experience of mankind, have been proved to be beneficial.

It will sound very strange to some to hear me talk about holding fast to old ways, old doctrines, old customs, old anything—me, whose whole life and ministry has been an incitement to new thought, to development, to on-going. As if there were any real antagonism between the hand that goes out to sow the seed, and the hand that comes back with the sickle to reap that which has been sown! As if growing, development, were not perfectly consonant with maintaining the stability of things gained already! As if there could be a wise conservatism that did not take into account a wise progressiveness!

We are not, in this world, to hold on to anything as if it were the perfect form of thought, or the final form of principle; but we are to hold on to all those things which long and ripe experience have shown to be beneficial until something else which is more beneficial can be put in their place.

There is something in the whole spirit of our age and na-

tion which seems to revolt from going in the old paths and ways. The idea of clinging to the past is held in much contempt among us. We are a new people, on a new continent, with new knowledges, new institutions, and new laws of various kinds; and we think that they are a great deal newer than they are. We look back and say, "Here we have no crowns, no sceptres, no aristocracy; here we have no such institutions as existed in imperial Rome or in mediæval Europe; here we have nothing that came down from the feudal ages. We are all new-made, and we stand in a bright contrast to the imperfect past." We glory in our newness, as if we were in advance of everybody and everything else.

Now, in the first place, we are not half as new as we think we are. Our ideas we have imported from Assyria, from Palestine, from Egypt, from Greece, from Rome, and from mediæval Europe. No man can sort and sift the knowledge on which we are building, or by which we are working, and say of any particular part of it, "This is modern." Our thoughts, and all the channels of our thoughts, are the result of the thought and experience of thousands of years that are gone by. Nor can we say that our institutions are new, or that our political habits and customs are new. The combinations are new, but the elements are old. Our knowledge of justice, of equity, of the rights of the individual and of the necessities of the State, —these have been gradually unfolded through thousands of years; and although we may have been building a different form of structure in our government from that which prevailed heretofore, the trees which we have hewn into timber have been growing through ages.

Therefore, we are not so new as we have supposed we were. We did not first dig up the precious gold; neither did we first unlock the secrets of philosophy; nor did we first give tone to moral sense. We did not, either, first think of the commonwealth, or of the welfare of the masses. We are not half so wise as we take ourselves to be. And yet, the spirit of young America is this: "We are the people, and the nation; and political and civil liberty will die with us, unless others borrow and keep that which we have developed." We

boast of being a progressive people, and of going on to something that is newer and better ; and at certain points this is very meritorious, though at other points it is less so.

At this time, new machines, new processes of industry, better houses, improved furniture, finer clothes, easier methods of locomotion, increased facilities for the interchange of thought,—these things are bruited in the newspapers. We congratulate ourselves that we do not belong to the old, slow-moving, crawling, worm ages ; that we belong to the age when men fly. Every day is disclosing more and more ; and the sun and moon are about to bow down and worship us, we think. We are proud of our progressiveness ; our newspapers ring it forth ; and it is fashionable to make it a matter of boasting.

Then there is, at this time, an extraordinary outbreak of activity in thought. Perhaps the last fifty years have been the most active in thinking that ever were known. Probably there was never a time when thinking spread over so large a space and included so much. Probably a greater multitude of persons are given to thought at this period than there have been at any other period in history,—though it is difficult to measure such a thing as that. Certain historic researches, the revelations which have been made in respect to the truths of the past, religious freedom and religious activity, and, above all, scientific discoveries and prophecies, have in our time set on fire the imagination of the young ; and men feel as though old things were passing away, and all things were to become new. The consequence is that thousands of men are inclined to doubt generally the social and moral results of past experience. There is a wide-spread feeling that probably we are blinded, as our fathers were, that we are living in a very narrow way ; that it is doubtful whether the prudential maxims, the conservative customs, and the social usages of the past have not answered their end ; and whether they are now more than straw which is to be gathered, that we may re-sow the field for another harvest and a better one. As if the experience of ages had learned nothing perfectly ! As if there were not some things which learned once are learned forever ! As if the social inter-



course of men, under a thousand different conditions, would not at last work out certain paths or methods of organization and inter-social relation which would last forever !

It leads many to throw general distrust upon the religious teachings which they hear ; not special, positive disbelief, but uncertainty : and, so far as the moral power of religion is concerned, simple distrust is just as mischievous as positive unbelief. It takes away thought-power ; for if there be anything that gives to religion validity and efficiency it is faith, it is conviction, it is belief ; and, just so far as you take that away, just so far as you shake the confidence of men in religion, you destroy its real power.

Now, the general uprising of thought, the reflex influence of new views and new principles, and a change of the relations of old truths and old customs, breeds, or tends to breed in young, unproved, and superficial minds, especially if they have a certain mental appetite, a great deal more of conceit than they have of intellect. It tends to produce in them the general impression that we do not know much about religion anyhow ; and that it is not worth a man's while to trouble himself about it : that, so far as it is convenient, by way of lubricating the wheels of society, it is well to foster it ; but that it is not best for a man to hit against the church ; that he had better get out of the way of it rather than to run over it or have it run over him ; but that, so far as its authority is concerned, every intelligent, progressive-minded young man should take into consideration that it is not wise for him to meddle with it.

Then, there is the question whether a larger liberty is not permissible in morals than used to be. Sociology is developing many scepticisms which are particularly mischievous because they tend to unlock and give greater freedom to that which is animal in man, and to tie up and give less scope to that which is divine.

So there are religious customs and institutions which men have been taught in early days to look upon as being of divine inception, and as carrying in them divine authority. Now, because men say that customs are good, and are to be retained, but are not of divine authority, there is a tendency

on the part of thousands to throw them away altogether. If, however, I teach that the church is an indispensable element in the moral growth of the community, and that, as men are, it is an institution wisely adapted to the maintenance of the truth, to its proclamation, and to the culture and drill of men in moral relations; if I hold that therefore the church is an institution vital to Christianity and civilization, is that view invalidated in the least because at the same time I hold that the church is not directly revealed, and specially ordained, of God?

I hold that, in the present state of intelligence throughout the community, common schools are wise, necessary, indispensable; but I do not think that on that account it is necessary to say that common schools are commanded in the Bible, or that the whole pattern on which we should conduct them is laid down in the Scriptures.

There are many things which experience has shown to be wisely adapted to the development of men, and to be essential thereto, and they are just as authoritative as though they had the Word of God behind them.

In early ages, before men are susceptible of moral reasoning, before they know how to see the relations of God in nature, an institution is made more sacred by saying that God appointed it; but in later days, when men are able to read, not only what God has given us in the Bible, but what has come to us through nature and experience, and the whole analogy of providence, the authority of an institution which commends itself to the judgment of men as adapted to their wants is as great as though there had been a divine word imprinted upon it. But, because it is said that the ground and reasons of religious institutions are changing, men are disposed to undervalue them entirely, and to say, "They have had their day; they are worn out; they have passed away; we must look for new revelations and a new era."

Thousands are, therefore, abandoning, in various ways, old paths, old thoughts, old usages, old customs, old habits, old convictions, old virtues, old manhood. And when you make inquisition, you will find that they are not the offscouring of society. You will find that among those who are loosest in



their adherence to the moral elements which belong to our common Christianity, are scholars. There is a tendency in this direction very largely developed in art, in literature, in journalism. I think that I shall speak within bounds when I say that, to-day, the educated men of England, of Germany, of France, of America, and, indeed, the leading men in history and in science, are tending away from the old grounds of Christianity, and that in many cases there is a positive skepticism in regard to it, and an absolute opposition to it. But in the great majority of cases, departure from old thought, old Christian sentiment, old institutions and old customs, is without any philosophical ground. It is atmospheric, if I may so say. It is the genius and tendency of young rising minds; and as such it is a matter of profound importance, and ought to command the attention of those who believe, as I do, that Christianity is the leaven of God to the world and to the ages, and that reactions from it, if they do not come back again, are reactions by which men are driven off into outer space.

Now it is no part of my purpose to caution you, to warn you, to persuade you not to think. For me to do that, would be as if a man should cure sore eyes by putting them out. It is no part of my purpose to exhort you not to change external forms, or to make re-adaptations of doctrine. It is a part of my business to help you to do it. I would not circumscribe your liberty; I certainly would not fasten you down by any ties of authority (I mean authority as standing in men and institutions); but there are many reasons why I can and should call you to a consideration of certain great permanencies in respect to thought, to moral character and to custom, which are peculiarly necessary to the young, and were never more necessary than in our time and in our nation.

First, we must not suppose that moral and social developments can ever be as rapid as physical developments, or that men can be changed in their principles, their feelings, and their inward life, in any such ratio as that in which we see external changes going on. Men say, "We are not living in the days before steam and electricity were known. We are living in a quicker age. We plow our fields by steam. We

talk across the ocean. There is a tongue that vibrates between Europe and America under the sea. We are traveling fast; we are living fast; and it is a shame for men to lag behind in the highest elements of humanity—in their moral and social feelings. We ought to be up and doing."

Now, progress is always fastest in the lowest stages, and it becomes slower and slower as it goes higher and higher, because it grows more complex. That part of our nature which stands highest, or which is nearest perfection, is that part which receives the least culture, and which therefore develops the most slowly. Those social elements which relate to our growth work faster in the lower realms of human progress than in the higher. A nation may build ships, and warehouses, and docks, and cities; it may cultivate fields until the grain can find no roofs to store itself withal; it may travel rapidly, and it may learn to travel in the air; it may make more exquisite glasses, and bring nearer the most remote objects: but it does not follow, because men can do these physical things, that they are more generous, more sensitive, more pure-minded, or more disinterested. It does not follow, because single individuals can do these things, that the mass of men can.

You can teach men to eat better food, you can teach them to wear better clothes, you can teach them to live in better houses, very fast, because all these things lie along the line of their lower nature, where they are strongest; but if you go higher, and teach them to be more just and to be more merciful, the process is slower; and if you teach them the subtle elements of self-restraint it is slower yet. There is no proportion and no analogy between the rapidity with which we develop in physical things, and the rapidity with which we develop in that part of our manhood which is truest and divinest. So that when, in this hurly-burly of expectation, men, without thought or reason, say, "We are living in a progressive age, everything is going by steam and electricity, and we ought to go fast in art, in politics and in religion; everything ought to roll over and over, and keep on the move," they are talking about things which they do not understand.

We must note, also, the danger of giving up any belief or custom which has been entwined in our moral sense. There is a ground here which is abundantly recognized, but which, generally, is not really felt—the necessity of regarding with a certain sacredness the lower steps or stages of our own development. Man is born at the bottom, and is obliged to go up steadily.

Our progress is like the progress upon stairs or a ladder. If you go up one step, and let the lower round stand, and you go up another step and let the two stand, and you go up a third and fourth, and so on, and let them all stand, you will gradually rise to the top; but suppose a man, taking his first step on the lowest round of a ladder, should say to his servant, “Saw the bottom part of that ladder off and throw it away,” and, taking the next, should say, “Saw that off and throw it away,” and should continue that process all the way up, when he had taken the whole forty steps he would be on the ground where he first started. It is by keeping the steps by which you have risen that at last you reach the top.

When a child has gone through his alphabet-book, in which are words of two and three syllables, he lays it aside; but he does not lay aside the contents of it,—he carries them along with him. They are the elements by which he is to go a step higher in reading. And practice there, when he has gained with it familiarity, carries him yet another step. So he goes from one step to another, from one range to another, taking with him, as he rises, that which he has acquired lower down.

What would be thought of a man who considered it necessary to perfection in literature that he should despise the alphabet? What would be thought of a man who should say, “The alphabet is good for pantalettes; but what has a *man* to do with the alphabet? I am learned. I do not want the alphabet.” It was as important to Isaac Newton when he was fifty as when he was five years of age. It goes on with a man all his life long.

It is not safe to remove or meddle with the lower stages of a man’s development, even those that are imperfect,



until they are superseded by something better. It is not safe for a man, when he is perfect (perfect, that is, in the human sense), to knock away the imperfect elements from beneath him, except by putting in their places something better. For instance, it is a thousand times better that the Parsee should worship light than that you should satisfy him by astronomical proofs that his gods are delusions, and so leave him with no God. It is better that a heathen should have the restraint which comes from even idolatrous worship, than that he should be left without idols and godless. It is a great deal better that a man should believe that the Church is the fountain of authority, than that he should be made to disbelieve in the authority of the Church without having taken in the greater authority under which the Church itself is an institution. I never would say to a deep-hearted Catholic, praying to the Virgin Mary, "That is an infatuation, a fiction." Until you can breathe into men the conception that in Jesus Christ is all that tenderness of the mother-heart which they long for, until you can preach to them the God that has in himself all these qualities which they seek in the Virgin Mary, it is better to let them believe in her; but when they understand that Christ is mother infinitely more deep, and tender, and compassionate, and quick to hear, and ready to help, than they ever conceived the Virgin Mary to be, then you may take her away—indeed, the Virgin Mary will die out of their thought then, and they will find in this new conception what they sought for in the Virgin.

It is not safe to take away a man's view because it is inaccurate, unless you give him a more accurate view. If you destroy a man's faith in those that serve him intellectually and dialectically; if you destroy his faith in the priesthood, in sacrifice, and in the system in which he has been brought up, in which his conscience has been trained, with which his associates have become interwoven, and in which is enshrined his memory of father, and mother, and brothers, and sisters, and neighbors, the tender thoughts of his childhood, and his early love; if you destroy a man's faith in the Ritual, the Cathedral, and all those things which are connected with

the religion in which he has been reared, and if you put nothing in its place, then, if you think you have done God good service, you are mistaken; you have neither done God service, nor the man either. You have destroyed the life that was in him, and left him a desert.

Wherefore it is a great deal better for a man to believe an imperfect thing, it is a great deal better for him to have partial truth, a little truth mixed with much error, than that what he has should be taken away from him, and that nothing higher and better should be given to him in its stead.

In the transition from a lower to a higher form of belief there is great peril. Strong natures are able to survive it; but it is a dangerous thing for a man to pass from one religion, espoused in his youth, to another espoused in his manhood. There have been a great many persons who have sailed out of the harbor of Popery and been wrecked long before they got into the harbor of Protestantism. Many have gone out from Heathenism who never got into Christianity. There are thousands of men who are brought up rigorously in Orthodoxy, and who start to go to Unitarianism, or Universalism, or Swedenborgianism, but who stop short of that at which they aim. They go out of one religion and do not get into another.

Orchardists often have to change the top of their trees. The fruit which they bear was thought to be good enough in old times; but better fruits have come up, which they wish to substitute for those which are inferior. Therefore they make the change by grafting. But it is not safe even to graft an apple tree, if it be large, all over at once. The shock which would thus be given it would greatly enfeeble it, if it did not kill it. So a skillful orchardist takes off a few branches one year, a few others the next year, and a few others the next, and grafts them; thus giving the grafts of one year a chance to set and grow, and then putting in others, and then others, the whole process occupying a period of two or three years. And if this care is necessary in the case of a poor, dumb apple-tree, how much more is necessary in the case of the human soul when its vital elements are changed! Where a person has been trained to certain beliefs

by family influences, by social customs, by public sentiment, by ordinances, by institutions, by music, by priests, by all manner of instrumentalities, to take away those beliefs rudely, and put nothing in their place, is the most perilous thing that you can do. You can cure a man of Papacy, and yet not make a Protestant of him. I would rather have a good Catholic, any time, than a bad Protestant; and I would rather have either of them than nothing, half-way between.

We are not, therefore, to consider, in a headlong way, that to change men's faith and their life-long habits, though they may be erroneous, is of course our duty. There is too often a partisan spirit in religion. If a man be of the Greek faith, or the Roman faith, or a Ritualistic faith, we consider him our lawful prey, and we go at him, and hunt him down if we can. Then, at once, an argument takes place, and he tries to convince us, and we try to convince him. As if changing from one mode of belief to another was going to change the conscience, the reason, the taste, the moral susceptibility, or any of the ten thousand subtle elements which belong to character rather than to mere dialectic belief.

Moreover, the relinquishment of trust or of practice should always be from worse to better. If a man has a poor way of looking at religion, it is not so much for you to convince him of his poverty as quietly to convince him of a better way.

If I were to go into the cabin of a pioneer who was brought up in the wilderness, and who knows nothing of bread except of the coarsest kind, and were to undertake to persuade him that his coarse bread was not worthy of a man's eating,—that it allied him to the ox, and to the horse,—and were to describe to him that which goes to make a feast in civilized society, would that be wise? Let me take a loaf of good bread, and go quietly and place it on his table, where the black, coarse, throat-scratching loaf is, saying nothing, and let him once pass a knife around, and scalp the good loaf, and begin to eat it, and he will say, "What is this? Where did it come from?" Is there not more conviction in tasting one piece of good bread than there is in forty arguments against poor bread?



Men are crying up this church or that church. Go and taste : it it is just like any other church. But let men once be brought into a communion where there is more patience, more real brotherhood, more belief of man in man, better living, and sweeter life, and then they will not need any arguments. The tasting satisfies them ; and they say, " How did you get it ? " and, " Where did you get it ? "

I say to a man in regard to the road he travels to market, " Your road is like a ram's-horn ; it goes up and down, and winds round and round, and it is not worthy to be called a road ; shut it up. " He says, " How shall I get to market ? " " Oh, " I say, " never mind the market ; shut it up. " But shall he shut it up before he has a better one ? Isn't a poor road better than no road at all to market ? If you want him to have a better road, make that better road, and then he will not need any argument to persuade him to travel on it, any more than a man with good bread before him needs an argument to convince him that it is better than poor bread.

So, if you are teaching men that one intellectual system is better than another, and that one religious organization is better than another, present to them the fruit which it bears : and if that is better than the fruit of the other system or organization, he will not need any argument to persuade him of the fact.

A man that has been eating frost grapes will not want many arguments to persuade him to eat Hamburgh grapes, if he once gets a taste of them. I would not eat a wild orange, if I could get good grafted oranges. I would not eat crab-apples, if I could get pippins or golden-russets.

Now if a man is sweet and disinterested, and is a devotee in the Roman Catholic Church, what can you do but accept him as a Christian ? Here is the fruit of Christianity, and there is no gainsaying it. If I could not get it in any other way, I would go into the Catholic Church. I hold that a man should go where he is made more manly and nobler : and if you want to draw men out of other churches ; if you, being orthodox, want to draw men out of churches that are heterodox ; if you think you have the best training institutions and the most fruitful intellectual systems, and you want

to bring these to bear upon men efficaciously, let them see what you are, and if they see that you are better than they are, they will adopt your systems and institutions. If I think that men have a heretical idea of the divine nature; if I think that they have lapsed from Calvinism; if I think that they are devil's agents, and are destroying the faith of the saints, and that they ought to be damned, and if, under such circumstances, men see me advocating orthodoxy in a spirit of deviltry, what inducement is there for them to come to my ground of belief? If a man holds a better system of religion than his neighbor, the first proof that we want of it should be in himself. If you are better than another man, your life, and not the doctrine which you hold, will be the evidence of it.

A man whom I know to have been crumpled up with rheumatism comes to me walking erect, and I say to him, "Halloa! my dear fellow, how did you get well?" He says, "I applied to such a physician, and here I am." This is the story. His neighbor, who comes limping along at the time, says, "That is all quackery; I have the only doctor that is good for anything;" and he, still crumpled up, is a specimen of what his physician does. Who would go to his physician, after seeing him?

If a church breeds meekness, sweetness, gentleness, patience, fortitude, love, courage, manliness, and disinterestedness; if it makes noble men,—uncrowned but undoubted princes,—then it is a church, it is a living epistle which will convince men; but sects will never make much headway, except by some such methods as political parties resort to, using coarse and base influences, until they come to understand that it is in vain to change beliefs, notions, institutions, customs, and systems, if men are not changed in the same proportion or ratio. What we want, therefore, is not change, except for betterment.

Here are three or four wretches on the sea. They have been wrecked, and they have lashed four or five planks together. The raft which they have thus formed is a miserable affair. They have almost no provision. Their water has given out. They have not a shadow of a sail. Their

outfit is about as poor a one as ever half a dozen men started for a voyage a thousand miles from the coast on ; but would you say to them, "Jump off : it is a miserable raft" ? It is true that that would end the journey ; but would you not advise them to remain on it until they were better provided for ? By and by there comes a boat alongside of them. It is crowded, and there is but little room, and it is but scantily provisioned. Nevertheless, they are invited to get in ; and I would say to them, "By all means, get off the raft and get into the boat ;" for the boat is better than the raft, although when the winds begin to lift themselves up it is a poor thing to carry men on a long voyage, and there is peril. Still later in the day, as the sun goes down, something more glorious than the sun dawns upon their vision. It is the sail of a fishing-smack. She bears down on them, and they are taken on board of her. How glad they are ! and they have reason to be. The fishing-smack is a small concern, and is not well provisioned ; but it is better than the boat, and that is the reason why they should abandon the boat and get into the fishing-smack. To-morrow there is seen what appears like a speck on the long ribbon of the horizon. A steamer is coming. She draws near. They are transferred from this ill-conditioned smack to that glorious ocean-going steamer. And how glad they are ! But even then they are not half so happy as they are when she lands them upon the good old solid continent. There they are safe.

Now, of men, some are on rafts, some are in boats, some are on steamers, and all are making the voyage of life ; and when you can change from bad to better, or from better to best, do so ; but do not change for the sake of changing.

I remark, again, that all new truths, like new wine, must have a period of fermentation. I am not a disciple of Darwin, I do not belong to the Darwinian school, or to the school of Huxley, or of Tyndall, or of Spencer ; and yet, I thank God for raising them up, all of them. I believe them to be men who are throwing out ore which, when it is smelted and purified, is to be precious indeed. I think them to be pioneer working men. Much that they write I think is true, and much I think is not yet true. They have a large follow-



ing, and they will have a larger and larger following, because there are elements of truth in their teaching which are indispensable to the reconstruction of men's beliefs. You need not say that it is science which they are developing. It is something that covers the whole ground of human existence. It touches belief in every single point. It goes back to the origin of man; and that determines largely the nature of man. In respect to Scripture, it touches the question of inspiration, and the structural method by which the Bible was created. It rises higher, and touches the whole question of moral government. Not only that, but it touches the question of sin, of individual responsibility, and foreshadows the modification and the reconstruction of theology as a whole. It looks forward to material changes in religious belief, in the organization of society, and in the education of the race. Germs of truth there are in it.

Now, shall men abandon old beliefs, and take these germs of truth that lie in the heavens like nebulous clouds, not yet ready to rain and produce grain, grass, or flowers?

All truths are, at first, on probation. They must be fought; they must suffer persecution; they must be reviewed; for it is with truths as it is with causes. They are obliged to be martyrs, in the first place. They have to be ransacked and vindicated. Their relations to life have to be considered, and proper inferences have to be deduced from them. They have to be scrutinized. Their effect, when they are brought to bear upon men's dispositions, has to be considered. Their connection with laws and institutions has to be looked into. Their legitimate influence upon the moral sense and religious conduct of men has to be discussed. The work is great; and he is not a wise man who, in this crude and early stage of these truths, will rush after them, and abandon the faith of his fathers. We are not wise if we follow these new lights before we know what they are—before we know their extent and their practical application.

I would be far from urging young men to be moles and bats; I would be far from urging them to hang on old beliefs as air-plants hang on the branches of old trees, having no roots of their own. I do not do that myself, and I do not

want you to do it. But seest thou a man wise in his own conceit; seest thou a man who, looking on these late discoveries, is exhilarated; seest thou a man who engorges himself with new wine and spews it out speedily, because it is not fitted for digestion; seest thou a man who takes faiths which, though they may not be absolutely true, are, nevertheless, approximately true, and have been held for ages by nations and generations, and throws them away because there looms up something which may be added to them, or may modify them? What hope is there for him?

Let me say a word, also, in opposition to the wild and unreasonable urgency of those who say, "Every man ought to be independent, and ought to find out things for himself. It is not becoming for a young American, at this age, to allow such books to be written as are written, and he not read and explore, and fashion his faith, not on what his mother or his father told him, but on what his reason, by the aid of the light which he can get, enables him to arrive at." Suppose I should say to a dandy, "It does not become you to buy your boots, your hat and your clothes of others; you should make them yourself?"—how absurd that would be! Why, I do not make my own shoes, because others can make better shoes than I can. I do not make the garments which I wear, because I can have them made better by others than I can make them myself. I do not make the watch that I carry. I should not know how to go to work to do it. I work for other men in some things, and they work for me in other things. It is indispensable that there should be an exchange of the results of men's training and skill. This is a factor in civilization.

But when it comes to belief, men think it is unmanly to have others think for them. Everybody must think for himself, it is thought. It is argued that man, having reason given to him for use, must see what truth is, although it is so immense and so complex.

Dr. Lindley, in the introduction to his work, leaving alone the sciences of geology, and zoology, and ornithology, and physiology, and all the other ologies, and speaking simply of botany, says, "Let no man think that he can in a

life-time become a universal botanist. A man should make his selection of some department—that of the mosses, or grasses, or some kind of flowers—and devote himself to that.” In this single science, a man must confine himself to one department, if he expects to attain to a perfect degree of knowledge. And if that is so in regard to one branch of physical science, how is it in regard to all the elements of a man’s faith, including the whole realm of government and its institutions; including the whole system of inter-filiation, man with man; including the whole sphere of religion that is the central city at which all the sciences meet? And to say to a young man, untrained, undeveloped, not accustomed to investigation, whose encyclopedia is the morning newspaper, “Why do you not stand on your own feet? why are you forever tied to the apron-strings of your nurse and your mother? why are you not an independent thinking man?”—would be like asking me why I do not make everything in my house—pictures, books, furniture, clothes, linen, ranges, bricks, stone and what not. It would be preposterous. We are so related, by the laws of God, one to another, that no man can think out everything for himself.

Is it then wiser to plunge into the realm of nothingness or the unknown, is it wiser to accept every rash theory that is set forth, is it wiser to give up your belief at once when its validity is questioned, or is it wiser to hold on to the faith of your father and mother till you can see something better? It is said (and I believe there is some truth in it) that the Legislature of Connecticut, when they first got together, resolved that the Colonies should be governed by the laws of God in the Old Testament until they had time to make better ones. It strikes you as humorous, but it was very wise. There was a vast portion of the ancient code that would not apply to the people of Connecticut. What had they to do with circumcision, and not carding wool and linen together, and performing sacrificial temple service? And yet, there were certain didactic and religious laws laid down in that code which were of universal application. So, it was well for them to be governed by the Old Testament till they had time to construct those special laws by which, in their peculiar



circumstances, they should be governed. It is better for any man to abide by the laws of God till he can make better ones! It is better for men to adhere to the faith of their fathers and mothers, or of the churches to which they belong, till they see distinctly a better way.

I must say one word more on the subject of new truths, and the advocates of them. I wish that words could change human nature. I wish, when men declare themselves to belong to the universal catholic church, it were an indication that they belonged to the universal catholic soul of God; but calling men catholic does not make them catholic. I wish men were orthodox when they say they are orthodox; but words do not make quality. A man is no better simply because he wears a broad-brimmed hat and a straight coat of drab. There have been admirable men, and some that might have been better, under the Quaker garb. A man is not changed by a name.

Now, there is more and more a tendency to praise scientific men who devote their lives to the investigation of truth, as though nobody else had ever done such a thing. They are praised for applying themselves to the finding out of facts, as if they were the only persons that ever applied themselves to the finding out of facts. Scientific men themselves say, "Oh, you are Christians, and you have faith; but we believe in truth." There is a conceit, an arrogance, a dogmatism, a bigotry of science, as really as there is of religion. Scientific men deride the old popes and bishops. They poke fun at the churches—especially the bawling Methodists, the tight-laced Presbyterians, and the no-laced Congregationalists. They look with pity or contempt upon the different sects and denominations. "But," say they, "we are disciples of the truth. Our business, morning, noon, and night, is to winnow the wheat from the chaff. We do not believe in anything that we can not prove. There may be a God, but we haven't found him out. It may be that the soul is immaterial and spiritual; but we will believe nothing that we can not reduce to a scientific fact."

Far be it from me to say that the world is not reaping, and is not to reap, abundant fruit from the labors of scien-

tific men ; but, I say that they are no better than other men. They are no more likely to be right in spirit. They are just as likely to be proud, and vain, and arrogant. They are just as likely to quarrel among themselves. They are just as likely to fall into sects—they are doing it. So, you need not think that there is any charm about scientific men, or that they are any nobler than other men. They are all human. They have the same traits, the same weaknesses, and the same liabilities, that other men have ; and they are to be absolute authorities for nobody.

There are many men in this world who follow them afar off. The guides and models are bad enough ; but their disciples are most intolerable—these little monkey disciples, pigmies, trotting around, knowing very little, and talking very much. What these really laborious men, in spite of their imperfections and human liabilities, are doing by patient toil, and much work, their followers are doing by sleight of hand and dexterity. I see on every side men who take the soap-suds of science, and stick their pipe into it, and blow a bubble, and seeing a face in it, say, “That is God !” It is only themselves, distorted in their own soap-bubble ! Folly is not dead yet.

In view of all the ground gone over—for I cannot pursue the subject further now,—let me say that all the tendencies which narrow the moral sense and enlarge the liberty of the passions, no matter from what source they come, are dangerous. Whatever may be taught in any direction, one thing is certain—that the flesh man is in antagonism to the spirit man. Whatever the theory of the universe may be, one thing experience has ascertained beyond all peradventure, that the flesh lusteth against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh, and that the right is with the spirit.

Anything, therefore, that unties moral sentiment ; anything that lowers the power of spiritual thought and spiritual emotion ; anything, especially, that strengthens the basilar appetites ; anything that works for the animal man and against the spirit man, is surely wrong,—I care not by what philosophy it is supported, and I care not what examples have favored it.

Our business in life is to bring under appetite and passion by the domination of reason and moral sentiment; and all tendencies which weaken reason and moral sentiment, and increase the power of the under man, are unquestionably to be avoided. There is death in them.

Secondly, all tendencies which increase self-conceit are to be suspected and disowned; for, although self-conceit is constitutional with some, this abides as an eternal maxim:

“Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit? There is more hope of a fool than of him.”

Well, now, how much hope is there of a fool?

“Though thou bray a fool in a mortar among wheat with a pestle, yet will not his foolishness depart from him.”

Grind a man up, and the last thing that will appear, if he is conceited, will be his conceit.

But what does conceit do? It makes a thing true to a man just because he thinks it is true. It makes a man handsome, because he thinks he is handsome. It makes anything that he thinks better than what anybody else thinks. It stops his investigation, therefore, and precipitates him on rude and crude conclusions. It teaches him not the truth, but the reflection of himself—his own fanaticism.

These tendencies are peculiarly developed under the spirit of our own age and our own institutions. They are encouraged by the public sentiment of the nation. Having a democratic republican government, and being a free people, we are constantly tending to laud self and individualism, and to become conceited. We are far more vain than proud. Would to God that we had something of the nature of our paternal stock; for they were more proud than vain. Both pride and vanity may be bad; but pride is a tower of strength, and is greatly to be desired, if it is not inordinate. It gives a sense of what is becoming; but vanity runs under all colors. A man should be proud enough to have self-confidence; but self-conceit leads one to desire the empty applause of men, and to run into exhibitory spirit—and that to the very end.

Those tendencies which extinguish in a man all spiritual elements, such as arise from faith in God, immaterial and spiritual existence and immortality, must inevitably degrade,

narrow, pinch, starve those great essential qualities out of which manhood has grown so much. You cannot conceive of heroism growing out of the abnegation of these great truths. Teach a man that he is born as the grass, and that he dies as the grass; teach him that the beginning and the end of his life are but a hand's-breadth apart, and how can you make a hero out of him? You cannot make a hero out of a creature of an hour. Send out and gather into a Sunday-school the summer midges which play fantastic games in the air, and you can as soon turn them into immortal creatures as you can turn into heroes men who have no belief in God or in the future.

There is in such a limitation an in-bred corruption which would in a generation destroy all heroism. This is one reason why I should long hesitate to teach the doctrine of annihilation, even if there were more arguments for it than there are. If the doctrine of the annihilation of the wicked were to be taught, the poor would be destroyed. Men would say of those low down in life, "Oh, these slaves, these underlings, these untaught and unbred creatures, are not going to live longer than through this life anyhow; they will die and go out; so that it does not matter much how they are treated." That which makes a man sacred before men is that he is sacred before God; he is sacred as carrying wrapped up in himself elements which are to be known in the grand future. It is what he is *to be* as well as what he *is*, that makes a man great among men, and that opens, or begins to open, that greatness which he shall have with God.

All tendencies which undermine your substantial faith in God and immortality, and your belief in the reality of a world of joy and a penal-world (for these two great truths go side by side), that right and wrong are eternal, and that in the other life, as in this, obedience to right is joy, and obedience to wrong is pain, and that joy and pain go on forever—all such tendencies have the effect to take away your hope, and so, your motive for striving to reach a higher life. A man under such circumstances becomes a beggar, a pitiful creature, worse than the beast of the field, less than the swine. The hog knows the law of his own being, and does



not fall below it; but the drinking, vicious, lewd, lecherous man—how far is he below his conqueror, the animal? and what is there that should save him? Why should I not crush him? Why should he not be treated like the sheep, the ox, the bear, the lion, or the tiger? Because there is in him an inextinguishable soul. Because there is that in him for which Christ died. Because there is that in him which prophesies. It is this that makes a man in his weakness, in his state of unculture, in his degradation and corruption, still sacred before God, as he should be before men, before magistrates, and before communities. Take away our thought of God and our responsibility to God, take away the doctrine of immortality and of infinite duration hereafter, and you have removed the foundations from under society, and it will not be long before down will go laws, and governments, and institutions, and mankind will have a weary pilgrimage in a world of unbelief, until they come slowly back to their old faiths, and build anew.

Make better paths, if you will; but abandon not the old paths; and of all the paths which you are not to abandon is that one which lies straight through the land toward Jerusalem. And when the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion, with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads, come thou! May I, and mine, and all of us, be there!

## PRAYER BEFORE THE SERMON.

Look down upon us, our heavenly Father, with that compassion which belongs to thee because thou art God. Because thou art perfect in holiness, have compassion upon our sinfulness. Because thou art perfect in wisdom, have compassion upon our ignorance. Because thou art exalted above all need of counsel, and dost dwell in an infinite strength of divine love, have compassion upon us who must lean at every step upon something, and who are of ourselves poor, foolish, stumbling. For it is of the nature of true greatness to have compassion upon that which is not great; and thou dost not look above thee, nor round about thee, to find thine equals or those that are akin to thee. Thine eye descends, and searches out all the infinite places of trouble on the earth; and thou art pleased to say that thou dost dwell with the broken and contrite spirit. Thou dost inhabit the heart which is conscious of its want, and is pierced with sin and sorrow and remorse. Unto such thou dost come to dwell, because thou art God. This is thy nature from eternity and unto eternity.

We rejoice that we have found out so much of thy being, and that we know so much of the meaning of divine greatness and goodness. We rejoice that thou hast said that thou art toward us what we are in our best estate as parents toward our children, but infinitely more and better. If we know how to give good gifts to our children, how much more shall our Father which is in heaven give gifts to those that ask him?

We are strong in this thought of thee. Once we feared thee because thou wert to us justice, and because justice, as we conceived of it, meant a sweeping condemnation of our weaknesses, of our infirmities, of our sharp and overwhelming temptations which brought in sin, and which also brought in fear and dread; and we had no refuge and there was no hope. Not until thou didst make thyself known to us as the God of infinite mercy and compassion, nay, not until thou didst manifest thyself through Jesus Christ, and give thine own beloved Son to die for sinful men, did we understand what was the greatness, and the grandeur, and the righteousness, and the power of divine love, so far removed from calculating selfishness among men; so far removed from all bargain and sale, and all the coarser modes of exchange on earth; so royal in its disinterestedness.

We rejoice as in treasures found—treasures that cannot be taken away from us—in these disclosures of thy nature; and we rejoice that thou hast not compassion upon a covenant, and hast not mercy upon a bargain; and that thou dost not govern thyself by arrangements, by outward provisions, as men by reason of their weaknesses manage themselves. Thou wilt have mercy on whom thou wilt have mercy. Thou art a God that dost take counsel of thine own feeling; for thou art everlastingly right, and it is safe for thee to do whatsoever thou dost desire to do; and in thy freedom, in the depth and purity of thy nature, and in the revelation that holiness seeks unholiness to heal it, and strength seeks weakness to exalt it,

we rejoice that thou art God because thou knowest how to descend and rescue the lowest and meanest creatures in thy vast realm, and supply their wants; and since we have known this to be God, we are not afraid. All our hope comes from this revelation of thy nature. Now, when we are weak, we know where our strength is. When we faint, we know where our healing is. When we stumble, we know where the hand is that will lift us up.

Grant, we pray thee, that we may not be led to presumption because thou art so kind and good. May we not blind our eyes, and harden our hearts, and tread under foot the blood of the atonement whereby we have been sanctified.

We pray that thou wilt grant a sense of thy presence and kindly thought and bounty to all who are gathered together this morning: to the aged, according to their necessities; to those that are in the midst of life doing battle, bearing burdens, harassed with cares. Give to them the sustaining grace which they need. To those who are entering full of the brightness of hope and courage upon the way of life, grant that providence and guardianship which they desire.

We pray that thou wilt bless the young—the little ones. Grant that they may grow up in all purity, and truth, and piety unto final salvation.

We pray that thou wilt draw near to any who are especially in affliction; to all those who have been called to darkness, to tears, to great heart-trouble. Be thou gracious unto them according to their need.

And we beseech thee that thou wilt guide this morning all who have come hither conscious of doubts and difficulties, and whose consciences are burdened therewith. Give them that light and that revelation of thyself, by which they shall know how to find the truth and to find God. May there be a witness of thee in the souls of those who are tossed hither and thither. May they have springing up in themselves a filial feeling and yearning. May their hearts cry out, Abba, Father! and so may they know that God loves them.

We pray that thou wilt grant unto those who are called in thy providence to labor among their fellow men, that they may be imbued with all spiritual wisdom from on high; that their power may be in the strength of God, and not in their own strength.

We pray that thou wilt bless the work of this church in its various fields of labor. We pray for our schools and Bible classes; for the superintendents and the teachers; for the scholars, for the families from which they come, and for the neighborhoods to which they belong. We beseech of thee that the blessing of the Gospel may be more and more diffused through the instrumentalities of this church; and may those who labor therein not be weary in well-doing, nor puffed up with success, nor discouraged because the fruit is delayed. May there be in each one a humble conception of his own power. May every one have such a sense of the grace and goodness of God toward him, that it shall seem to him an inexpressible privilege to labor even in the lowest places in the vineyard of the Lord.

We pray that thou wilt bless those gathered together in this congregation to-day who are strangers. Bless those from whom they are parted. Grant, we pray thee, that those whom they have left behind may be blessed of God and preserved.

Prosper those who are pursuing errands legitimate, and in thy providence. We pray that thou wilt be gracious to all those who are round about us. Bless those who are detained from church. Be mindful of those who are sick, and of those that watch with the sick.

We pray that thou wilt grant thy blessing to rest upon all the churches in this great city. May they be filled with light, with warmth, and with that sympathy which shall draw them to men for the healing of their needs.

We pray that thy servants who are ordained to preach thy Word may more and more be taught of God, that their preaching may be with power from on high and full of fruit.

Bless, we pray thee, our nation; bless all the nations of the earth; and grant that that joyous day may speedily come when there shall be no more idols, no more superstition, no more ignorance, no more unjust oppression, no more weakness, but when all men shall be filled with the knowledge of God, and all nations shall rest at peace among themselves, and the whole earth shall be filled with thy glory.

And to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit be praises everlasting! *Amen.*

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### PRAYER AFTER THE SERMON.

OUR Father, we pray for thy blessing to rest upon the truth. Grant that we may be led by it, not by our own prejudice, nor our pride and vanity. May we put aside self-indulgence and obedience to worldly custom. May we be inspired by thy Spirit. May we rejoice in all truth. As it unfolds more and more, may we know that it is truth by that which it does to us—by the richness of our souls, by our self denial; by our humility; by our patience; by our power to endure hardness as good soldiers. May we rejoice in all thine outward bounties—in ships that sail, in warehouses that stand stored full of blessings for the body, in industries of every kind, in better houses, in all the comforts of home; and yet, may we know, and be assured every day, that the kingdom of God is within us; and may we believe that that is our greatest treasure and our whole hope. Bless religion to the young. Bless those who are seeking for it. Screen them from error. And we pray that the time may come when the glory of the Lord shall reign among men, and be manifested in their walk and conversation; and when men shall be exalted individually, and shall be collected into purer households and nobler estates, and shall stand forth the sons of God.

And to thy name shall be the praise, Father, Son, and Spirit. *Amen.*



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

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